UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/2000/NGO/9
21 July 2000

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on the Promotion and
Protection of Human Rights
Fifty-second session
Item 4 of the provisional agenda

THE REALIZATION OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Written statement* submitted by North-South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[12 July 2000]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.00-14380

The World Health Organization (WHO) has just published a list classifying health and social protection systems by State. A State's position on the list is not related to its economic power: the United States of America, for instance, is only thirty-fourth. The fact is that the right to health and social protection is a basic right but one which is making no headway in the South and is losing ground in many of the States of the North.

It emerges from these findings that the countries of the North that top the list are those that have the most highly developed public health services and where the health system is not in the hands of private insurance companies. As to the countries of the South, they do not have the means to cope with diseases such as AIDS, a situation to which, for all practical purposes, the countries of the North are turning a blind eye, as are very often the Governments of the South themselves which are riddled with corruption and give their preference to public spending that will help keep them in power.

Licensing and patenting laws and, more generally speaking, the policies of transnational corporations and pharmaceutical laboratories are, moreover, inimical to the interests of the people.

Adopting resolutions and making recommendations will not reconcile the irreconcilable - making the right to health effective without upsetting the international economic order and the logic of the legal system regulating it.

It is up to the Sub-Commission to look squarely at the facts of the issue; only then will it be possible to seek to achieve the effective realization of the right to health and to all economic and social rights.

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